

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 VO-03 SCA-01

SCS-03 SR-02 ORM-03 DRC-01 (ISO) W

----- 072201

P R 181658Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9985

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: CVIS UR CASC CGEN US PINT SREF (VEREIN, ANDREI)

SUBJ: VISIT TO ALL-UNION OVIR

REF: A) MOSCOW 7069, B) MOSCOW 8098

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: TWO CONSOFFS CALLED JUNE 17 ON HEAD OF ALL-UNION OVIR ANDREI VEREIN, AND DISCUSSED STATUS OF REPATRIATION AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION CASES ON USG REPRESENTATION LIST 16. IN HALF-HOUR INTERVIEW, CONSOFFS STRESSED TEN LONG-UNRESOLVED AMCIT CASES, BUT GENERALLY ATTEMPTED LOW-KEY, NON-ADVERSARY APPRAOCH IN EFFORT TO EMPHASIZE MUTUAL INTEREST OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS IN RESOLVING HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS. VEREIN'S RESPONSE WAS AN AGGRESSIVE, SOMETIMES JOVIAL BUT OCCASIONALLY EMOTIONAL LECTURE, IN WHICH HE REITERATED MANY OF THE STANDARD SOVIET ARGUMENTS AGAINST PERMITTING FWERER EMIGRATION. CONSOFFS HANDED UPDATED VERSIONS OF USG REP LIST 16 AND LATEST AMCIT LIST TO VEREIN, AND INTERVIEW

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ENDED WITH HIS RELATIVELY AMICABLE PROMISE TO STUDY ANEW

THESE CASES. VEREIN'S COMMENTS AS REPORTED BELOW OFFERED NOTHING NEW BUT ARE OF INTEREST AS A REPRESENTATIVE SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS OF SOVIET HARDLINERS ON EMIGRATION ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSOFFS OBER AND STEINER, WHO DEPARTED MOSCOW JUNE 16 AFTER EXTENSIVE FAMILY REUNIFICATION AND EXIT VISA REPRESENTATION EFFORTS DURING THEIR TWO-YEAR TOURS, HAD SOUGHT FOR ABOUT THREE WEEKS DIRECTLY AND THROUGH MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION TO ARRANGE FINAL MEETING WITH ALL-UNION OVIR DIRECTOR ANDREI VEREIN TO MAKE THEIR FINAL APPEAL ON UNRESOLVED REP LIST CASES, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON AMCIT CASES (SEE REF A). REZNICHENKO OF MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION HAD INDICATED HE WOULD ARRANGE APPINTMENT, BUT DID NOT DO SO. CONSOFFS QUERIED HIM ABOUT IT AT JUNE 14 FAREWELL RECEPTION ON EVE OF STEINER AND OBER DEPARTURE. REZNICHENKO INDICATED HE HAD TENTATIVELY ARRANGED APPOINTMENT JUNE 17, AND CLAIMED HE WAS UNAWARE OBER AND STEINER WERE DEPARTING JUNE 16. CONSOFFS SUGGESTED HE KEEP APPOINTMENT FOR CONSOFF WILLEMS.

3. MORNING JUNE 17 WILLEMS PHONED REZNICHENKO REQUESTING VEREIN APPOINTMENT FOR HIMSELF AND CONSOFF FOURIER. EMBASSY WAS SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED VEREIN WOULD RECEIVE BOTH AT THREE P.M. THAT DAY.

4. VEREIN MET CONSOFFS IN COMPANY OF UNIFORMED DEPUTY OVIR CHIEF LIEUTENANT COLONEL OVCHINNIKOV AND A CIVILIAN-CLAD MR. DAVIDOV. DURING INITIAL AMICABLE EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, VEREIN STATED HE HAD BEEN OUT OF TOWN IN SOUTHERN USSR IN RECENT WEEKS, IN CONSONANCE WITH PRIOR OVIR ALLEGATIONS THAT HE WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR MEETING WITH STEINER AND OBER PRIOR TO JUNE 16. HOWEVER, HE HEDGED REGARDING THE DATE OF HIS RETURN TO MOSCOW.

5. CONSOFFS MADE LOW-KEY PRESENTATION ABOUT CONTINUED INTEREST IN FAMILY REUNIFICATION, AND SHOWED HIM COPY OF AMCIT REPATRIATION LIST PRESENTED BY AMBASSADOR IN MARCH; COPY HAD BEEN AMENDED TO SHOW THAT TWO HAD SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED EXIT PERMISSION. IN SCANNING LIST ALL THREE SOVIETS INDICATED THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH SOME OF THE NAMES ON IT.
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STILL CONVIVIAL, VEREIN NOTED THAT AMCIT SIDNEY BELINSKY, RECENTLY OF ODESSA, HAD BEEN GRANTED EXIT PERMISSION. "YOU'VE TAKEN BELINSKY (REFERRING TO THE 19TH CENTURY LITERARY CRITIC) FROM US, I SEE," HE REMARKED. "NEXT YOU'LL BE WANTING GOGOL', I SUPPOSE." BOTH VEREIN AND DAVIDOV CONTINUED NODDING AND POINTING AT NAMES ON THE LIST WITH GRUNTS OF RECOGNITION EXCHANGED WITH EACH OTHER.

6. CONSOFFS THEN PRESENTED SIMILARLY ANNOTATED COPY OF REP LIST 16. VEREIN AND DAVIDOV THUMBED THROUGH THE PAGES FOR A MOMENT, THEN BEGAN A SERIES OF DISPARAGING COMMENTS ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF ISSUE OF EMIGRATION, AND ABOUT SUCH LISTS IN GENERAL. DAVIDOV SAID THAT ON A RECENT LIST, THEIR INVESTIGATION HAD SHOWN "TWO HUNDRED AND THREE PERSONS" WERE EITHER DEAD OR NON-EXISTENT, NO LONGER DESIRED TO EMIGRATE, OR NEVER HAD. WHEN ASKED TO SPECIFY ANY OF THE NAMES OF THESE PERSONS, HOWEVER, BOTH DEMURRED, SAYING THEY "DIDN'T REMEMBER." PRESSED ON WHO HAD PRESENTED LIST THEY WERE DESCRIBING, THEY INSISTED IT WAS LIST FROM "EMBASSY." (COMMENT: THE OBVIOUS FAMILIARITY OF BOTH OFFICIALS WITH THE NAMES ON THE LISTS, AND THEIR UNSUPPORTED ATTEMPT AT PROVIDING A STATISTICAL REBUTTAL TO CONSOFFS, INDICATES THAT THE EMBASSY'S FREQUENT REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF THESE CASES HAVE SUCCEEDED TO SOME EXTENT IN FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE PROBLEM. END COMMENT.

7. VEREIN THEN OCCUPIED FULLY HALF THE INTERVIEW WITH A MONOLOGUE, SOMETIMES JOVIAL BUT SOMETIMES EMOTIONAL, EXPOUNDED ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE US AND SOVIET SYSTEMS, PEOPLE AND HISTORY, AND HOW SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICIES MUST BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF THOSE DIFFERENCES. HE COMPLAINED THAT AMERICANS SEEMED UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THAT SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICIES ARE APPROPRIATE AND CORRECT. HE CITED THE OLD EDUCATION-TAX-ERA CLICHES ABOUT THE "DEBTS TO SOVIET SOCIETY" INCURRED BY PERSONS WHO HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE ADVANTAGES OF SOVIET SOCIETY-- HE NOTED THAT PERSONS LIVING IN THE USSR ARE BORN FREE-OF-CHARGE UNDER THE SOVIET MEDICAL SYSTEM (BEREIN UNDERSTOOD BIRTH IN THE UNITED STATES COULD COST A THOUSAND DOLLARS), RECEIVE FREE EDUCATION, ARE HOUSED IN APARTMENTS AT MINIMAL COST (RENTS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE HIGH, HE NOTED), RECEIVE LIFELONG FREE MEDICAL CARE (VEREIN HAD HEARD ABOUT THE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OF PENSIONERS TRYING TO MEET MEDICAL COSTS IN THE UNITED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATES), ETC. SUCH PERSONS WHO HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THE SOVIET STATE OWE THE STATE A DEBT. (COMMENT: IN CONTEXT HE SEEMED TO HAVE IN MIND A MORAL DEBT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE COUNTRY, NOT A FINANCIAL DEBT LIKE THE SUSPENDED EDUCATION TAX.)

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RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 VO-03 SCA-01

SCS-03 SR-02 ORM-03 DRC-01 (ISO) W

----- 072197

P R 181658Z JUN 74
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9986
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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8. DAVIDOV COMMENTED THAT MANY OF THE CASES WERE NOT BONA FIDE "FAMILY REUNIFICATION" CASES IN THAT THEY HAD MORE RELATIVES HERE THAN IN THE UNITED STATES. VERIN COMPLAINED ABOUT THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT WHEN A FAMILY GOES, THEN WANTS TO GET ALL THE UNCLES AND COUSINS OUT SUBSEQUENTLY.

9. A NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS WHO HAD LEFT THE USSR WANTED DESPERATELY TO RETURN, VEREIN CONTINUED, AND THE USSR IS NOT GOING TO TOLERATE A DISORDERLY MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE BACK AND FORTH, BACK AND FORTH. UNLIKE AMERICANS WHOSE PEOPLE HAD SETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES IN RECENT CENTURIES, RUSSIANS AND OTHER SOVIET PEOPLES HAVE TIES TO THEIR SOIL. CERTAINLY THERE WAS A LOT OF EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES IN CZARIST TIMES, BUT THAT WAS BECAUSE LIFE WAS SO HARD FOR THE ORDINARY PEOPLE. THAT HAD ALL CHANGED.

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10. VEREIN ASSERTED THAT A GENEROUS LEVEL OF EMIGRATION IS PERMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOVIET LAWS, AND IS NONDISCRIMINATORY- THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WANTING TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES AS OPPOSED TO OTHER COUNTRIES. (EMBOFFS

MADE NO COMMENT.)

11. VEREIN EXPRESSED HIS ASSURANCE THAT THE UNITED STATES TOO RESTRICTED EMIGRATION OF CERTAIN PERSONS, SUCH AS THOSE PRIVY TO MILITARY SECRETS. ASKED IF HE WAS SUGGESTING SOME PERSONS ON US LISTS WERE BEING REFUSED BECAUSE OF THEIR SENSITIVE POSITIONS IN SOVIET SOCIETY, VEREIN QUICKLY CHANGED THE SUBJECT. HE COMPLAINED THAT THE US EMBASSY WAS "TIRING" HIS OFFICE WITH THE REP LISTS, THAT IT WAS THE ONLY EMBASSY WHICH DID SO, AND THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAD MORE IMPORTANT PROBLEMS TO WHICH THEIR ENERGIES SHOULD BE DEVOTED. BECOMING VISIBLY EMOTIONAL, HE MADE A GESTURE OF CONTEMPT TOWARD THE LISTS AND WITH A DISPARAGING TONE SAID "SUCH PERSONS" DID NOT DESERVE THE ATTENTION OF DIPLOMATICS.

12. AS HE RELAXED BACK INTO AMICABILITY VEREIN MENTIONED THAT HE HAD BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES ON TDY TO SOVEMBASSY IN 1965, AND TRAVELED IN THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES. HE SAID HE HAD PLEASANT MEMOREIS OF TRIP.

13. AT END OF MONOLOGUE, CONSOFFS RESTATED HIGHLEVEL USG INTEREST IN REPATRIATION AND FAMILY-REUNIFICATION CASES, AND HUMANITARIAN ASPECTWHICH CALLED FOR THEIR RESOLUTION. IN ANSWER TO CONSOFFS' ARGUMENT THAT MANY OF THE CASES WERE "SIMPLE PEOPLE" WISHING ONLY TO JOIN THEIR ONLY REMAINING RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES, VEREIN ALLEGED HE WOULD PLACE NO OBSTACLES IN THE PATHS OF SUCH PEOPLE, AND SAID HE AND OVIR WOULD "LOOK OVER" THE EMBASSY'S LISTS AGAIN. ON THAT NOTE THE CONVERSATION ENDED CORDIALLY.

14. COMMENT: THERE WAS NOTHING NEW IN WHAT VEREIN HAD TO SAY, NOR IS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THE PRACTICE OF A SOVIET OFFICIAL BEING FRIENDLY AND AFFABLE UPON MEETING, NEGATIVE AND BOMBASTIC DURING THE SUBSTANCE, AND FRIENDLY AND AFFABLE AGAIN UPON PARTING. VEREIN PRESUMABLY OCCUPIES AN IMPORTANT POST IN THE HIERARCHY WHICH CARRIES OUT SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICIES, AND HIS VISIBLE PREJUDICE AGAINST EMI-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GRATION AND WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS AND HIS VIEWS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE MAY BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE THOUSANDS OF OVIR AND MILITIA OFFICIALS WHO HANDLE AND PROCESS EXIT VISA APPLICATIONS ACROSS THE USSR. MOST OF THEM MAY COME FROMTHE SAME MOLD, AND HE MAY HELP SET THE STYLE. AMONG FOREIGNERS IN MOSCOW WHO FOLLOW SOVIET EMIGRATION TRENDS AND PRACTICES IT IS A CLICHE THAT PART OF THE PROBLEM IS THAT SOVIET OFFICIALDOM, AND PERHAPS MOST OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE, REGARD EMIGRATION, OR AN EFFORT TO EMIGRATE, AS AN ANTI-SOVIET ACT. VEREIN SEEMS TO BE A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE PROOF THAT THERE IS TRUTH IN THAT CLICHE.

EXEMPT.STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPATRIATION, JEWS, EXIT VISAS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: WorrelSW
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MOSCOW09397
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740159-0412
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740636/aaaabemw.tel
Line Count: 278
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) MOSCOW 7069, B) MOSCOW 8098
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: WorrelSW
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 MAY 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by WorrelSW>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT TO ALL-UNION OVR
TAGS: CVIS, CASC, CGEN, PINT, SREF, UR, US, (VEREIN, ANDREI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005